

Procedure and Organization

The new parliamentary rules and regulations used during this session have resulted in one of the most efficient and productive sessions we have ever seen. Besides, the purpose of parliamentary reform is not solely to serve efficiency. As one author has said:

The purpose is to work out a process consistent with the democratic values of the Canadian people. We do not simply need a process for passing laws. We need also a process that passes the test of free and adequate debate.

We agree with the government that there is some need for a provision regulating the allocation of debating time, but we insist on a reasonable consultative procedure and refuse to accept the government's insistence on arbitrary imposition of closure in advance of debate whenever agreement cannot be reached. A closure rule for cutting off debate is still on the books. It can be invoked when the government feels the right of debate is being abused or that the public interest is suffering; therefore rule 75c is unnecessary.

Government spokesmen have estimated it will take a minimum of ten days to get a bill through the house if rule 75c is applied. Ten days may be adequate for the leaders of the opposition parties and their chief speakers to express objections to a bill. However, it is far from adequate for the public to become concerned about the implications of a proposed law and to start writing their members of parliament. It is far from adequate to ensure public involvement in our democratic process. Only such public involvement, triggered by debate in parliament, can stop the passage of objectionable legislation when the government has a substantial majority. If there is cause for alarm in respect of any piece of legislation the government may bring down, there must be plenty of time for the people of Canada to be alerted; hence, rule 75c must be defeated.

I was elected to represent some 78,000 men, women and children in my district in the province of Newfoundland. I was sent here to represent them by bringing forth their problems. They elected me because they had confidence that I was capable of being heard. The only way I can be heard to present their problems, and to remind the government of Canada of its neglect, is to stand on my feet and speak on their behalf.

I am completely dismayed and disgusted that the representatives who sat in this House of Commons for some 20 years since Newfoundland entered Confederation were silent and complacent. That is why they were known in Newfoundland as the "Silent Sev-

[Mr. Marshall.]

en". They were forced, by an order from beyond the reaches of the federal government, to keep their mouths shut. But you can only fool some of the people some of the time. The people of Newfoundland were fooled long enough; that is why there had to be a change, and they voted for a change.

The people of Newfoundland are blessed with honesty, sincerity and common sense. They reacted by showing their disappointment and disgust during the election of last June; they were not overcome with flowers and kisses. They now believe in involvement, and are showing they mean business by organizing into associations and councils to protest the neglect and disregard for their welfare. They are shouting out to become involved; they are shouting out to participate. The only manner in which they can become involved is by their member of parliament finding out why they are neglected with regard to common, ordinary public services that the rest of Canada enjoy.

I am expected to do a conscientious job of representing the people of my district, and I cannot do it by wasting my time in this House of Commons because the government is determined to further neglect and disregard the people of Newfoundland. I cannot, and I will not. I must stand on my feet and keep reminding the government that they had better mean what they say when they expound continuously the pledge of equality of opportunity, regardless of where Canadians live, and regardless of race, creed or colour. The government continues to camouflage its dictatorial ideas to its own backbenchers, though I fail to see why these backbenchers continue to stand for this complete degradation of their conscience.

But fortunately, Mr. Speaker, there is an opposition in this country. The past year's events have shown the government's disregard for sincerity and democracy. Rule 75c will for a long time to come represent "C" for "contempt" for parliament and for the people of Canada. And let there be no misunderstanding of what will remain in the government's conscience for many years to come.

● (8:40 p.m.)

Mr. Ambrose Hubert Peddle (Grand Falls-White Bay-Labrador): Mr. Speaker, there are several arguments that I want to make in my remarks on the proposed Standing Order 75c that I hope are of a positive and constructive nature. The attitude of this house throughout the session has, I think most members will